

# Dieting with the denomination, determination

February 3 2012

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As a brand new year gets underway, people all over America are resolving to better manage their weight and have a more healthy 2012. According to a new study, those starting new weight loss programs may be surprised to find out that both location and level of experience may influence their success. A recent article published in *The Journal of Black Psychology* (a journal from the Association of Black Psychologists, published by SAGE) finds that African American women beginning a new group weight loss program are more successful if they are less experienced with weight management and if the program meets in a church.

The authors of this new study monitored two groups of women in the same [weight loss](#) program. One group met weekly at a university and the other group met in a church. After 13 weeks, they found that the women meeting in the church setting lost a greater percentage of weight than those who met at the university. Additionally, those women who set out to change their eating and exercise practices for the first time lost a greater percentage of weight than women who had experience managing their weight.

Researchers Tracy Sbrocco, Robyn Osborn, Robert D. Clark, Chiao-Wen Hsiao, and Michele M. Carter studied 55 [African American women](#), ages 18 to 55, involved in a 13-week weight-management program designed to promote long-term diet and exercise practices that produce moderate but lasting weight loss. Of these 55 women, 19 met together in a church and 36 met at a [medical school](#) in the area. All participants

were weighed and had physical fitness tests at pre- and post-treatment.

The authors provided possible explanations for their findings by stating that [women](#) with weight-loss experience may find it more difficult to lose weight when starting a new program because they are less likely to seek and accept social support for their efforts and are unable to shake the [bad habits](#) that they have learned in past weight-loss programs. Furthermore, they explained that churches are familiar environments that are conducive to lending encouragement and support.

"Church-based groups have a built-in social support system that allows members to see each other, check in, and follow up on behavior changes," noted the authors. "Whereas individuals who attended the university often rushed into groups as they began and left as soon as the groups ended, individuals in the church setting were more likely to linger before and after group times."

**More information:** The article entitled "Assessing the Stages of Change Among African American Women in a Weight Management Program" from the *Journal of Black Psychology* is available free for a limited time at: [jbp.sagepub.com/content/38/1/81.full.pdf+html](http://jbp.sagepub.com/content/38/1/81.full.pdf+html)

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